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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO THE 14TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
Brussels, 5 December 2006

Today's United Nations works closely with regional organizations, in Europe and beyond. However, it is our longstanding engagement with the OSCE that consistently sets the standard for such partnerships, particularly in the security, economic and humanitarian realms.

As I have said before, our two organizations were born to work together. From Central Asia to the Western Balkans and elsewhere, the United Nations and the OSCE have jointly confronted challenges to peace and security. Such collaborations complement our respective strengths, and enable us to learn from each other's experiences. In recent years, we have worked particularly closely in Kosovo, and I hope that the OSCE will not only maintain but expand its existing presence there.

Our organizations have also expanded cooperation on the economic and environmental issues that frequently underlie conflicts. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe works closely with the OSCE not only to develop more effective strategies for conflict prevention and security, but also to identify new responses to existing and emerging economic and environmental risks.

And in the realm of humanitarian affairs, large numbers of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons benefit from growing UNHCR-OSCE cooperation. Our initiatives safeguard both refugees and internally displaced persons, and help conflict victims rebuild lives as well as livelihoods.

In 2006, we also intensified cooperation to combat drugs and crime. Led from the UN's side by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, such collaboration ranges from human trafficking to money laundering, from corruption to the forgery of travel documents.

In all these efforts, the sum of UN-OSCE engagement has invariably proved far greater than its constituent parts. That is why our partnership has been so fruitful, and why it retains such promise.

Of course, numerous challenges continue to require our attention. For instance, we need to further improve information sharing, better delineate overlapping responsibilities, and enhance joint conflict prevention efforts. However, I am confident that, by working together, we can overcome any obstacles, and build not only a better, safer Europe, but also a more peaceful and prosperous world.

It is in that spirit that I wish you all a most successful meeting.